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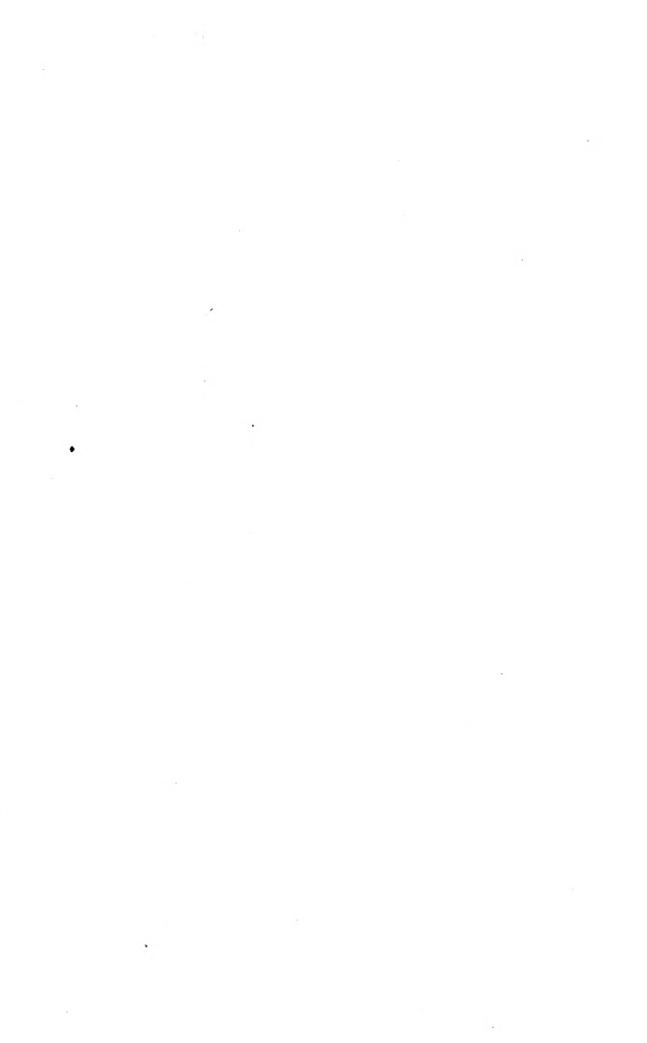
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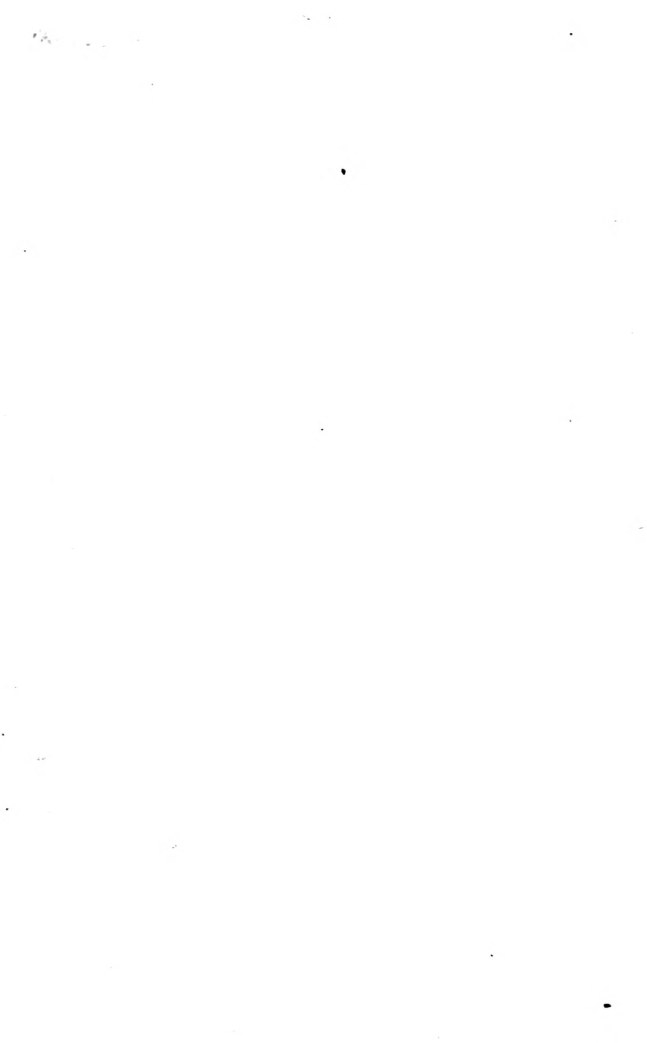
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CEDAR BROOK STORIES;

OR,

THE CLIFFORD CHILDREN.

BY A. S. M.,

AUTHOR OF "ONLY A PAUPER," ETC.

FRANK GONE TO THE WAR

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FRANK

GONE TO THE WAR.

CHAPTER I.

TOM RYAN.

“It is very singular,” said Frank, a short time after the family returned to Cedar Brook, “that I have not found the least trace of Tom Ryan, until to-day, since Bennie’s death. I have made many inquiries at the Point, where Bennie said he was living, but only ascertained that he left a few days prior to Bennie’s death,—no one knowing whither he went. I believe he was concerned

in some theft, and ran away to escape detection. I have also watched for him when in Boston, hoping to meet him and deliver Bennie's Bible and dying message. This evening, at Mr. Scarrett's request, I had been visiting a poor family at the Point ; and on my way home was passing a crowd of men standing near the door of a German boarding-house, when my attention was attracted by hearing some one say, 'I'll bet you two to one Tom Ryan knows all about it.'

"I turned, and saw a short, thick-set, savage-looking fellow elbowing his way through the crowd, and immediately recognized him as Tom; though he was dressed in sailor's

clothes, and looked like a full-grown man. He had not altered much in appearance, except in looking older than when I first met him in Essex street; and I also recognized him by the deep scar across his forehead, and his coarse, matted hair, which looked as if untouched by comb or brush for the past three years

“ I hesitated to approach, or speak to him then, as I saw several of the crowd had been drinking, and felt it was not the time to speak. I stepped into the doorway of a house close by, and waited, hoping to gain some knowledge by their conversation of his present home or haunts. Their conversation was low and disgusting in the extreme, interlarded as it was

with oaths and curses ; and had I not felt anxious to fulfil Bennie's request, should not have considered myself justified in listening or remaining one moment.

“ ‘ I don't know the first thing about it,’ said Ryan, in reply to some question. ‘ I've been off to sea, I tell you, for over two years, and only run ashore last night -- and intend to keep on dry land for the future. I've had a hard time of it, I tell you, boys ; and hang me if I'll ever go to sea again, or think I was cut out for an old salt. I'd rather break stones on the highway.’

“ ‘ Or pick locks for a living, and board at the state's expense, said a small, wiry-looking fellow, with a

dirty pipe in his mouth, slapping Tom familiarly on the shoulder.

“ ‘ You be hung for a drunken babbler ! ’ answered Tom, his face dark with passion as he doubled his fist in the man’s face. ‘ Mind your own business, and I’ll take care of mine.’

“ The wiry man drew back and hid among the crowd — the rest laughing at his discomfited air.

“ ‘ I’ll tell you what, boys,’ pursued Tom, ‘ I’ve given up the sea for good, and am going into business on my own account. I’ve saved up a few shiners, — enough to pay cash down for stock in trade, — and mean to start clear. I’m tired of fights, and getting drunk, and sticky fingers —

have marked out a clear track for myself, and mean to be an honest man.'

" ' Hip, hip, hurrah ! for Tom Ryan ! ' ' Ryan an honest man ! ' ' Honest Tom ! ' ' Parson Tom ! ' ' Tom the Methodist ! ' ' Praying Tom ! ' was shouted, in tones of scorn and derision, from every man in the crowd ; some taking off their hats in mock homage, some pointing at and hissing him, and some cursing.

" As the crowd shouted, Tom roughly pushed those nearest him aside, sprang up the steps, and stood in the doorway, with folded arms, gazing upon the scornful faces below with a strange expression of savage determination, and yet a pe-

culiar working of the muscles of his face, as if an opposite feeling was struggling in his breast, of a softer nature. It seemed like what I have read somewhere of the struggle between the powers of darkness and the angel of light for the possession of a man's soul. Now, evil triumphs, and passions, fierce and strong, convulse the whole frame ; the face is darkened, and the eye glares in maniac madness upon the beholder. Again, goodness and purity have the ascendant, and tenderness and love relax the features, tears moisten the eye, and prayer lingers upon the lips. I thought of this as I looked at Tom, upon whose face the gas light opposite shone full, revealing

every feature and expression distinctly.

“For full ten minutes he stood there motionless as a statue, — conflicting feelings chasing each other across his features, his lip curled in scorn, his eye flashing, his brow knit in a dark scowl which rendered his coarse features still more repulsive. Silenced at last by his silence, the crowd waited for him to speak; every eye turned upon him. Seeing he had their attention, he said, in a calm, low voice, quite in contrast with his usual loud, blustering tone :

“ ‘ If you’ve done with your mum-mery, boys, I’ll put in a word or two. You all know I’m not given to speechifying; I can fight better

than talk — hit a man in the ribs better than argufy ; so you wont get soft words or fine talk from me ; that ain't my fashion. I shall come to the point, and hit the nail on the head at once. I *do* mean to be an honest man ; and you can laugh both sides of your mouth, if you choose, or split your throats yelling like a parcel of wild Indians, — that's not *my* lookout. I ain't a parson, a Methodist, nor a prayer-maker. I havn't got any religion, and, what's more, never expect to have any ; but I've got a mind of my own, and intend to keep it. I told you just now I'd been to sea for two years. That was the truth ; and the ship I went in had a pious captain and offi-

cers or board, besides a praying set among the crew. But I didn't catch any religion from *them* ; for I swung a wide berth from the whole kit, and never spoke unless I had to. I didn't mind their preaching, either, but would swear when I chose, if I did run the risk of the cat and being cut short of my grub ; or, what was worse, being talked to and prayed over by the captain, — who, somehow, seemed mighty concerned about my soul ; though I told him if his'n was safe, he needn't concern himself about mine.

“Well, to make a long story short, one night the biggest tempest I ever saw came up, and all hands were stepping about lively, hard at work ;

for we were running into the teeth and eyes of the wind, which blew a heavy gale — the rain poured in torrents, the thunder roared, and the lightning flashed as if the end of all time had come. I had just been aloft to reef the top-sail, when by some chance my foot slipped, and a plunge of the vessel sent me overboard.

“‘ You never heard the cry, ‘ A man overboard !’ ” did you ? If you had, I reckon you would never forget it to your dying day. The first time I heard it, was when Sam Prentiss fell from the mast-head in a storm ; and I was one of the crew that manned the life-boat to his rescue. We picked him up, but he never spoke,

—probably struck some part of the vessel in falling, and never knew what killed him.

“ ‘ But, as I was saying about myself, I didn’t strike anywheres, but was washed clean overboard ; and though a good swimmer, I tell you I never had such a tug for my life before !— and never, too,’ said Tom, taking off his hat, and wiping the moisture from his brow, as he strove to hide his softened feelings, ‘ did I look my life square in the face till then. As the great, black, swashing waves came rolling up, like mountains, before me, I saw my whole life written in big letters on the face of them, staring at me like a legion of devils, or ghosts risen from the

grave to torment me. *I didn't feel much like swearing then !* I remember. I believe I tried to pray, but couldn't make it out ; — not a word would my lips utter. I wasn't used to the business, and didn't know how. But one thing I *did* do, — I vowed to myself if I ever reached the ship alive, not a drink, or an oath, should pass my lips while my name was Tom Ryan ; neither would I take what didn't belong to me, or help others steal. Well, the upshot of the whole is, my strength gave way, I felt a great rushing in my ears, and was taking my last drink of just about the saltiest water I ever tasted, when I was hauled aboard the life-boat ; and the next thing I knew, found

myself stretched on the cabin floor, with the captain and two sailors rubbing me down, as I've seen women folks polish a mahogany table. I don't know whether the rubbing, or the hot drink they poured down my throat, cured me; but this I *do* know: I didn't make that promise for nothing. I've kept my word pretty straight ever since; and not a drop of liquor or an oath has run through my teeth since that night, — and never shall, while I'm above ground, or have my senses. *I'm an honest man now*, and always mean to be!' and Tom drew himself up with a curious mixture of pride and defiance, as he looked around upon his former associates.

“A suppressed groan was heard from some one outside the crowd, and a few hisses. Quick as light, Tom turned in that direction, — his eye flashed, and his face wore its old look of a bull-dog just ready to spring at his assailant.

“ ‘ Mark me, boys, — I promised I wouldn’t drink, nor swear, nor steal ; but I didn’t promise I wouldn’t fight ; so if any of you have any accounts to settle, I’m ready. Just come out, man-fashion, and we’ll go at it fair and square. But let one of you dare to hiss or groan at me again, and I’ll let more daylight into your brain than you’ve bargained for ;’ and Tom held up a fist like a sledge-hammer, strong enough to fell an ox.

“Awed by his manner and his well-known strength, there was no response ; and in a short time, one by one, the throng dispersed, leaving Tom alone on the step.

“Waiting till the last one disappeared, he passed slowly down the street, turning toward the road leading to Dorchester.

“Now, thought I, is my opportunity ; so, stepping from the doorway, I followed him quietly some distance, then quickening my steps, gained his side.

“‘Good-evening, Mr. Ryan,’ I said speaking as indifferently as I could. ‘I am glad to meet you : I have been on the look out for you for two years past. Do you live in Roxbury?’

“ ‘ Who the — I mean, who are you, sir ? — I never saw you before. One of the police, hey ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Not quite,’ I answered, lifting my hat. ‘ I am Frank Clifford, — a friend of a former acquaintance of yours, and have a message I wish to give you from him.’ ”

“ ‘ Clifford — Clifford,’ repeated Tom, — ‘ I’ve heard that name somewhere. I remember your face and hair, but not where I’ve run against you. You say you’re the friend of an acquaintance of mine ; — just enlighten a fellow, will you ? Who is he ? — what’s his name ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Bennie Mead.’ ”

“ ‘ Oh, ho ! ho ! — little Bennie Mead ! I see through it all now. I

remember — he's living with you — run away from Si Short, and followed you home. "I'm living now with a gentleman what sends me to the Sabbath school!"' imitating Bennie's voice and manner. 'Ha! ha! ha! the little dog! How is the little chit? Has he forgot how to fight? Can he pitch head-foremost into a fellow's bread-basket, and floor him before he has time to wink? Where is he?"

"'Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest,' I could not help repeating; though I felt the words might aggravate, or be thrown away upon a man like him. He was not angry, however; but suddenly stook still, laid his

hand upon my shoulder, and turned me toward a gas light we were just passing, looking me steadily in the face,—his own face wearing a softer, more human expression than I had ever seen upon it.

“‘Just say that again, if you dare! — perhaps I didn’t understand you,’ he said, in a quick, nervous tone.

“I repeated the words, slowly, looking him full in the face; and added, ‘Bennie died in my arms, Tom, and his last words were a message of love and forgiveness to you.’ I then repeated Bennie’s dying words. ‘And here is his Bible, that I have carried in my pocket daily ever since his death, hoping to meet you and give it into your own hands. Take

it, Tom ; and may Bennie's God bless it to you. Read it for his sake, read it for your own. As I heard you say to-night that you promised God, in the hour when you was so near eternity, sinking alone in the dark, deep ocean, that you would neither drink, swear, nor steal, if he would only spare your life, so now add one more promise to those you say you have faithfully kept, and tell me you will read this holy book ; and not only read, but pray over it also, — pray for strength to do right ; to be made meet to join Bennie at last in his heavenly home ; and, till then, to serve God as faithfully and thoroughly as you have heretofore served sin and Satan.'

•

“As I handed him the Bible, he took it almost reverently, opened, closed it, and then, without a word, placed it carefully in his breast-pocket, and buttoned his coat close to his throat. Turning on his heel, he walked rapidly forward,—wishing, as I thought, to escape my company. I was hesitating whether I should leave him without saying good-night, when he stopped suddenly, came back, took me by the arm, and asked, abruptly, ‘Do you see that house over there?’”

“‘Yes,’ I answered, a little startled by the abruptness of his question and manner.

“‘Well, I’ve got a room there. It’s a poor place, but respectable, — only

an old man and his wife in the house beside himself. I've bought a horse and cart, and start to-morrow peddling tin and wooden ware. I shall be gone all the week, but be home Saturday night, to stay over Sunday. If you ain't too proud to come and see me in my own room, drop in next Saturday night, and I'll have a talk with you. I can't do it now. Answer yes or no. I don't want any maybes, or perhapses. Come then, or come never, — choose for yourself.'

“ Again I marked upon his face that mingled look of fierceness and eagerness, as if the soul of the strange man had braced itself to meet with repulse and scorn, while his better

feelings were pleading for sympathy and help. Conquering my feelings of instinctive aversion, in the hope of gaining a right influence over him, I held out my hand, which he instantly grasped in his, and replied :

“ ‘ Mr. Ryan, I will call at your room next Saturday evening at eight o’clock, if that hour will be agreeable to you. I hope you will look upon me as a friend, who has no other object in cultivating your acquaintance than a sincere desire to benefit,—and, it may be, assist you in carrying out your intention, so openly and fearlessly expressed to-night, of living henceforth as an honest man. May every success attend you in

the business you commence to-morrow ; and, believe me, I advise you kindly when I caution you against keeping company in future with the evil set of men I saw you among to-night.'

" 'Never fear for that, Mr. Clifford,' Tom answered, giving my hand a grip that made me cringe. 'I've swung clear of the whole crew ; and they know me too well to trouble me, if I choose to drop their company. Good-night, sir. I shall be on the lookout for you next Saturday, — come then, or come never !' — and the rough man lifted his hat, and crossed the street to his house."

"Do you think you can trust, or influence such a bad man as he must

be?" asked Lulu. "I am afraid he will change his mind, refusing to see you on Saturday. Perhaps he may insult you, should he be in one of his ugly moods."

"I have no fear of that; though I must say he is rather a hard subject to attempt to benefit. His feelings were somewhat softened to-night, to be sure; but I cannot expect such feelings to last. His nature is so rough, his whole life has been so bad, not to say wicked, that the effort to reclaim him, if not a hopeless task, will at least be a long and difficult one. Men as bad, nay, worse than he, have been reclaimed; and I will not despair, but do what I can, leaving the result with God,—know-

ing that all power lies with him, and he can bless my efforts if he chooses."

"You are right, Frank," said Winnie. "Go on in your good work; and even the hardened Tom Ryan may become a changed man. Bennie often talked to me respecting Tom; and I knew from what he said that Tom was homeless and friendless, like himself, and perhaps had never experienced a kind word or look of interest in his whole life. His home was with thieves and drunkards; his education, that of the street; his employment, only street-fights and brawls. He loved to torment Bennie, and provoke him to fight, but in reality bore him no malice; for

Bennie told me, also, that Tom nursed him, once, a whole week, when he was sick ; and several times stood between him and his drunken master when he found he was cruelly beating Bennie for refusing to steal, or beg for money, to supply him with rum."

" Bennie told me the same, auntie ; and, from what I saw of Ryan to-night, I feel sure there is some good feeling in him still. I shall do my best to carry out Bennie's wishes, hoping some good may be the result in the end. One thing is certain, — I have gained some hold upon him to-night, and if I accomplish nothing else, I may keep him from returning to his old associates, and encourage in trying to do well."

CHAPTER II.

A VISIT FROM BLIND LUCY'S FATHER.

“WHAT a singular-looking man just passed up the carriage-road!” said Annie, the next afternoon, as herself and Edith were busy with their sewing, while Lulu read aloud from a newly-published work. “Did you observe him, Edith?”

“No, I did not. Some straggler, I suppose, asking for alms. Bridget says they are getting plenty as crows in a cornfield, of late. She don't complain now, as she used to, that 'niver a bit of a poor craythur can

she find to give the bits of cold mate and praties to — the holy virgin have mércy upon their hungry stomachs, the poor things!’” answered Edith, laughing, but without raising her eyes from her work.

“But he did not look like a beggar,” persisted Annie. “He was dressed well enough; but appeared so ungainly and awkward I could not help noticing him. His beard reached nearly to his waist, his eyes were black as coals, and his eyebrows almost met over his nose. He had a valise in his hand, and looked like a countryman seeking a place to put up at for the night. Hark! — I really believe Bridget is coming with him through the hall.

What can she be thinking of, to bring him in here !”

Before Edith had time to reply, the door was thrown open, and a tall, sunburnt, rough-looking man, stalked in, laid his valise and a stout cane on a chair by the door, advanced to the centre of the room, and looked from one to the other as he rubbed his hands together with an expression of immense satisfaction, while a broad smile played over his features, displaying a set of firm, white, even teeth.

“ Well, well, well ! — ain’t forgot old friends, have you ? ” he said, the smile fading from his face as he looked earnestly at Edith, who evidently did not recognize him.

“ Guess it's ‘ out of sight, out of mind,’ ain't it ? Reckon you've never been on the prairies, or heard tell of Ned Johnson and his little blind gal Lucy ! ”

At that word Edith threw down her work, sprang forward, and clasped his great rough hand in hers, — her whole face beaming with pleasure.

“ O, Mr. Johnson ! — how very, very glad I am to see you ! I have *not* forgotten you, — be assured I have not, sir ; but having no thought of seeing you here, of course I did not recognize you at first. Let me introduce you to my sisters, Annie and Lulu, — you have heard me speak of them. And here comes mother, — she

will be glad to see you. Please take this arm-chair, and make yourself at home."

"Thank you, thank you ; this is just as it should be," said Mr. Johnson, handing Edith his hat, and sinking back in the arm-chair with a sigh of relief, as he drew a bright red silk bandanna handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the moisture from his brow. "It would have about killed me outright, if you hadn't given me a welcome, or I'd really thought you'd forgotten the old man. Howsomever, you've given it now, honest and true — bless your sweet face ! and Ned Johnson ain't the fellow to be tickled with fine words if the heart ain't in them, I tell you.

You've got a pretty likely set of daughters here, marm," addressing Mrs. Clifford, — "mighty good-looking too, all of them. But you'll excuse me if I make the most of this one, and say she is the biggest beauty of the lot. You see we've met before, and are on the footing of old friends. Wont you kiss me?" he added, abruptly, turning his face towards Edith, who still stood by his chair. "I haint shaved to-day, to be sure; but I reckon my face is clean."

A merry laugh escaped Edith, and the color mounted to her temples; but she touched her lips, without hesitation to his forehead, and then resumed her seat by Annie. Mr. Clifford and Frank soon came in, and,

after an introduction, entered into conversation with Mr. Johnson, who was now perfectly at ease, and amused them all by his original manner and strange way of expressing himself. Not an article of furniture in the room escaped his notice; neither had he the least hesitation in asking the price of anything that particularly took his fancy.

After supper, Mr. Clifford invited him to make his house his home during his stay, — an invitation that he accepted as frankly as he saw it was given.

“ You see, squire,” he said to Mr. Clifford, at the same time taking from his coat a mammoth pocket-book, “ I’ve got plenty of the need-

ful with me to pay my own way ; can afford to stop at any of your tip-top hotels, and run the whole bill of fare through, gimcracks and all, when I've a good appetite. But I'm more given to the enjoying a good, social chat, than eating soups and turkey-fixins. I'll be free with you, squire : you all seem so of one mind about my staying, I'll take you at your word, and try to accommodate you for a couple of days ; that is," addressing Mrs. Clifford, " if I don't discommode you, marm. You look kinder peaked and sickly ; hope you are not troubled with the shakes ? "

Frank bit his lips as he glanced at Edith, who tried hard not to laugh outright ; while Lulu was seized

with such a sudden fit of coughing as forced her to leave the room in haste, much to the concern of Mr. Johnson, who hoped she "hadn't got a consumption, or was troubled with weak lungs."

All this time Edith had not asked for Lucy ; neither had he made any allusion to her, except when he first entered the room. Several times she had attempted to speak of her ; but a nameless dread checked the inquiry, and she spoke of other things. Feeling, at last, that Mr. Johnson must think her silence very strange, she ventured to say :

" You have not spoken of Lucy, Mr. Johnson—is she well ? I should so love to see her, again ! I have

never forgotten her, or the pleasant visit I made at your house. Do tell me of her."

Mr. Johnson instantly covered his face with his handkerchief, great sobs heaving his breast as he rocked to and fro, without speaking, making strong efforts to suppress his tears. Edith at once comprehended the whole sad truth, and with instinctive delicacy drew her chair close to him, and took his hand in her own. A painful silence reigned in the little circle, broken at last by Mr. Johnson, as he uncovered his face and replied :

"I've got no little Lucy now : my little blind gal is sleeping soundly by her mother's side, under the green

grass and bright flowers of the prairie. I dug their graves with my own hands, in that same lot where you saw those two white steers and the young colt. You remember how Lucy fed the colt, and how the young critter seemed to know she was blind,—following her round the field, and resting his head on her shoulder when she stopped, and looking kinder sorrowful, as dumb animals will sometimes?”

“I remember it all, sir. How long was Lucy sick?—what was the cause of her death?”

“Well, not anything in particular. She kinder pined, and faded, and grew weak, till there wasn’t nothing of her left. She looked for all the

world like a white rose I've seen hanging from a broken stem, — all wilted, and drooping, and homesick. But she never complained, never said she was sick, never spoke of herself. She would sit quiet all day weaving her little baskets, or knitting socks for me to sell in Alton, — her little fingers looking like wax, and her hands so thin you could almost see through them. Sometimes she would sing softly to herself, or say over hymns she had learned, or repeat verses from the Bible as straight as a string, not missing a single word in a whole chapter; — I know that; for I've taken the Bible, when she asked me, and followed her along to see if she said it

right ; and I never knew her to fail once. Every night, when I got through my work, she used to come and creep into my lap, lay her head on my bosom, and talk to me about heaven, till I'd be all melted down like a child. She seemed to know all about the place, — how it looked, and what folks did when they got there. She said the streets were all gold, and there were gates made out of big pearls, and trees full of fruit, and nobody was sick, or sorry, or blind ; but everybody was happy and joyful, and full of praise and glory. She explained it all so clear to me, that I began to think considerable about it myself ; and sometimes when I was out working, I'd stand stock-

still, and look right up to the sky, and try to realize there was a heaven, like what she told of, up above the clouds, and that my poor blind Lucy was going there, and I should be left all alone. It was mighty hard to feel this, I'm free to say; but a good deal harder to say I was willing to give the child up! I couldn't, somehow, do that; neither could her mother, for a long while. It enermost killed me to say, 'Thy will be done,' as Lucy often made me repeat after her when she talked of dying,—or going home, as she called it; just as if she was here on a visit. Her mother, who was a real good woman, and joined the Methodists just after you left that summer, got reconciled

to the parting with Lucy before I did, and tried to brace me up by saying all the comforting words she could, and trying to smile and look cheerful. Would you believe it? — after our child was laid out, her minister rode over to see us, and talked and prayed with us both; and when he went away, my wife said right out, as brave as could be, though I knew she felt bad all the time, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!’ *That kinder staggered me.* I knew I hadn’t got so far as to say *that*, though I didn’t dare to murmur against the Lord for taking her, — that would *never* do. I didn’t want to find any fault,

but I couldn't really bless the Lord for taking my one, only pet lamb, and leaving me childless and alone ! It was a dreadful hard case, squire ' turning to Mr. Clifford, whose moistened eye evinced his sympathy with the bereaved father. " If I'd only had other children, as you have got, they might have helped fill up the gap in my heart, and I could have held up my head, and kept on for their sake. Trouble never comes single, you know, sir ; — I've found that true in *my* experience. One year after I buried my Lucy, my wife took sick, and died of bilious fever ; and I was left stark alone — not a wife, or child, or relative in the whole world. I was a poor, lone,

miserable man, you may guess, — just like a tree cut down to the roots ; branches and leaves all gone ; nothing but the old stump remaining ; not a twig or stem left for a bird to sing or build a nest upon ! The old place looked dreadful desolate and dreary. I tired of listening all day for my blind child's voice, or my wife's footsteps ; so I sold my farm, — all but the little spot I've fenced round their graves, — put part of my money in the bank, and took the rest and started off to see the world, and visit my little miss here. My Lucy loved her, and talked of her every day while she lived."

" And I have never forgotten her," said Edith, wiping away her tears.

“It is from my visit that day to Lucy, that I date my first serious determination to become a Christian; and whenever I feel indifferent or conscious of being remiss in duty, her sweet, sightless face rises before me, and I see her slender finger pointing upwards, and hear her soft voice saying, ‘We will meet there, wont we?’”

“Then she told you she shouldn’t live?” said Mr. Johnson, quickly.

“Not exactly in so many words; though I understood her meaning, as she spoke so solemnly of our meeting ‘there;’ and I judged she was anxious, at the time, not to pain you by referring to the subject in your presence.”

While Edith was speaking, Mr.

Johnson drew out his pocket-book, and took from it a little package which he handed to her, saying :

“ When you said good-by to Lucy, you remember you put a gold ring upon her finger ? Well, that ring never left her finger till she died. Her poor hand grew so thin that it became a world too large for her ; so she asked her mother to tie a bit of thread to it and fasten it round her finger, so it should not slip off and be lost. When she died I took it from her finger, and cut off a lock of her hair, — thinking maybe I might see you again, and you’d set by it, seeing it was Lucy’s.”

“ I shall value it beyond price. sir,” said Edith, unfolding the paper

and taking from it a long lock of soft, glossy hair, and also the ring, which she placed upon her own finger, with the resolve it should never be taken off during her life.

Edith had many questions to ask respecting Lucy, and Mr. Johnson dwelt long upon the last hours and words of his lost child, — his lonely heart finding relief in the unfeigned sympathy of Edith and her whole family.

At the hour of retiring, he shook hands warmly with each one, thanked them for their kindness, and added, in his homely, but expressive way :

“ You’ve done me a heap of good in listening to my troubles, and letting me talk so free of them that’s

dead and gone. "If any of you ever come to sorrow, you may reckon there is one heart in this world that will be the heavier for your grief. To-morrow I shall be myself again ; and not rile you all up with my troubles, but leave my wife and child in their quiet graves upon the prairie, to rest till I'm laid by them."

The next morning Edith accompanied Mr. Johnson to Boston, as he expressed at the breakfast-table a desire to see the city, but seemed rather fearful of getting lost in the "snarl" of its crooked, narrow streets, should he venture to find his way alone.

"I can track my way, miles and miles, across a prairie, and bring up

standing just where I choose," he said ; ' but you city folks have such a fashion of making your shops and houses all alike, and running your streets here, there, and everywhere, like the criss-cross lines in a spider's web, that I'll be toasted if it don't take a cuter brain than a lawyer's to know what part of creation you are in ! Yesterday I inquired my way three times. The last time, the fellow behind the counter snickered right in my face, and said, ' Look here, stranger, — I guess you're given to travelling in circles ; for this is the third time within an hour you've been in here, and asked the same question ! If you'll just keep straight ahead, as I told you to the first

time, and not turn either to the right hand or the left, you'll find Roxbury before sundown." I felt kinder cheap, and gave a good look round the store; and I vow it did look considerable natural; so I reckon the fellow was right, and I had turned up some plaguy street or other, and come back three times to the place I started from!"

"Why didn't you take an omnibus, or the horse-cars," said Edith, laughing, "there are plenty of them running to Roxbury, every half-hour during the day. The driver would have left you within a mile of our house, and given you directions how to find it."

"Oh, confound your cars and

coaches! — I had enough of them coming on here. *My* feet were made to use, and so were my boots. When I'm on my feet I know where I am; but when I'm on a boat or the cars, I'm likely to find myself nowhere! Bilers and injines have an ugly habit of busting up, just as you've got yourself fixed to your mind, and sending a fellow further than he bargained for in starting, — and no extra charge for damages! Give me a good pair of calf-skins, built like these, and they can be depended upon, — even if you do travel far enough to need two soles to one upper!”

Edith smiled as she looked at the stout pedal coverings of the old man, and thought they were indeed “built”

for service rather than beauty — requiring the strength of a hardy backwoodsman to wear without fatigue.

As he seemed to have no particular business to transact, excepting the purchase of some shirt-collars and a plaid silk neck-tie, but appeared rather anxious to see the “shows” he had heard people talk about who came from the East, Edith went with him to the Athenaeum and the Museum. He was quite delighted with both places; rather preferring the Museum, — particularly interested in the zoological and ornithological departments, many species in each being familiar to him. The shells and minerals, he said, were pretty enough, but he liked the animals

better, — all except the giraffe : “ that,” he said, “ was too unnatural for anything ; — the Lord never stretched a poor, dumb beast’s neck that length, *he* knew ! It wasn’t in the nature of things for a critter’s head to grow six feet beyond his stomach, unless he was intended for a walking lighthouse for all other beasts to steer clear of. Boston folks might be up to some things, but they missed their mark when they fixed up that critter to impose on strangers ! ”

“ Are you fond of music ? ” asked Edith, after they had dined. “ There is a rehearsal at the Academy of Music, this afternoon, and if you like, we will go there ; perhaps, as

the music is all instrumental, you might enjoy it."

"Well — no — not exactly. I do like to hear a good, rousing sing at a camp-meeting; but I don't incline much to your tooting horns and fiddles, — they always make me head-achy, and down at the heel."

"Suppose, then, we take a walk round the Common, and you look at some of the fine houses on Beacon street, — old-fashioned, to be sure, many of them are, but still, the residences of some of our merchant-princes, and looked upon with pride by many Bostonians."

Walking slowly through the several malls, Mr. Johnson amused Edith, and sometimes passers-by,

with his characteristic remarks and undisguised admiration.

“Now this is what I call sensible!” he exclaimed, as he stood still in one of the broad avenues, and looked up to the great, interlacing branches of the noble elms on either side, and then across the smooth, green plats of grass, intersected by neatly kept gravel-walks, crowded with a living panorama of men, women, and joyous, trooping children. “Then you *have* got one place in town where you can draw a long breath without swallowing a whole block of bricks and mortar? I should think some of your rich men would want to step in and buy the middle lot there, close by that duck-

pond, and put up a house, if it wasn't for nothing else than to see how a house would look standing alone, without a whole eternity of windows and doors each side of it. I'd do it the first thing, if I thought of settling here any time."

Well satisfied with his view of the city and its "lions," Mr. Johnson returned to Cedar Brook for another night. Early the next morning, with a hearty grasp of the hand, that almost brought tears to the eyes of the children, he bade them all good-by, promising to call again should he ever come that way.

"It ain't much likely I shall come this way very soon; — there's too many houses, and considerable more

people here than suits my taste. I feel all cornered up and pinched for room ; I want more sky, and a bigger patch of green earth than you've got in these parts. I've heard tell of Pike's Peak, and think strong of making a call in that region, before I settle down again. Maybe I'll bring up at Californy. They do say that's a taking place, and perhaps I shall try that a spell. At any rate, when I make up my mind, I'll get you word somehow ; then if any of you should have a travelling fit, you'll find me at home and glad to see you. If I only knew any safe hand coming on this way, I'd send you on that colt, miss. Nobody has ever rid on him yet, and he is rather

wild ; but you might tame him, after a while. I've no use for him ; but I hate to sell the poor dumb critter, seeing I was training him for Lucy. I'd rather you should have him, and maybe I'll send him on."



FRANK'S VISIT TO TOM RYAN. — E.



CHAPTER III.

FRANK'S VISIT TO TOM RYAN.

“I MUST fulfil my promise to Tom,” said Frank to his mother, as he finished cutting a bunch of flowers and laid them upon the rustic seat beside her. “It is fifteen minutes past seven, and I promised to be at his room by eight. I wish to be punctual to the time appointed; for there was that in his looks and decided tone as he repeated, ‘Come then, or come never,’ that assured me he would brook no excuse for delay.”

A brisk walk soon brought Frank

in sight of the house pointed out to him by Ryan as his present home. He scanned the building closely as he drew near, and was glad to see, that, though old and out of repair, it looked, as Tom said, respectable ; the premises being much neater in appearance than that of others in the vicinity. Knocking at the door, it was opened by a neat, pleasant-looking woman of some sixty years old, who, in reply to Franks question, " Does Mr. Ryan live here ? " said, kindly :

" Yes, young master ; please walk up stairs. You'll find him in his room, — the first door to the right."

Following her directions, Frank ascended the uncarpeted stairs, and

found Tom standing at his door, his looks expressive of pleasure at the sight of Frank, though he merely said, in his usual abrupt tone :

“ Come in, sir. I thought you would come. It's just on the stroke of eight. Take a chair here by the window ; the night is warm.”

As Frank entered, an ugly-looking mastiff stood in the middle of the room, growling and showing his teeth, with the evident intention of disputing his right of crossing his master's threshold. Tom immediately gave him a kick that sent him howling under the table.

“ Take that for your manners, sir ! Don't you know friends from foes ? Wait, next time, till I tell

you to show your teeth, or I'll break every bone in your body. Good dog that, sir," he added, by way of apology, as Frank uttered a protest against his brutality. "Worth his weight in gold for a watch-dog, — always takes care of my cart when I'm busy — is about the best friend I've got. But dogs are dogs, and like you all the better for giving 'em a good kick now and then: they expect it, and always carry a hang-dog look if they don't know who's master."

As Tom spoke, Frank glanced round the room. It was of good size, the floor bare, but clean; its two windows shaded by dark blue calico curtains. The cot-bed in the

corner, covered with a patchwork spread, a painted pine table, two chairs, a sailor's chest, and a rude model of a schooner upon a small light-stand, constituted the furniture. A faint attempt at decoration was shown in some cheap, colored prints, without frames, pasted upon the walls, and two large conch shells on the hearth in front of the fire-board.

Tom noticed Frank's hasty glance, and said, with an air of pride, as he pushed back his coarse, ill-kept hair from his brow :

“Hope you like the looks of things ? You see I've gone into the housekeeping business quite nat'ral like ; — own all the traps you see ;

bought them all with honest money ; got no fear of the police on my track. The old woman down stairs cooks the vittles, and I fork over the solid, every Saturday night, for room-rent and board. It's an awful pity Bennie run aground before I was settled ; for I was calculating strong, all my voyage home, on taking the boy and bringing him up myself. I could have made him useful in my business ; and, when he got a little bigger we'd have gone shares in profits and stock in trade, — maybe set up two carts, and doubled our circuit."

" Very likely ; but he is better provided for now, Tom ; though I am glad to understand by what you say that you really felt no ill-will toward

him. "He was a bright, affectionate little fellow. We all became much attached to him, and mourned his death deeply."

"Yes, yes, — I know you did. He told, himself, about your taking to him; and I was glad you didn't send him adrift, as many a one would have done in your place. I did like to punch him when I had a chance, or dare him to fight; for I liked the fun of getting him mad, and seeing him spunk up when I called him names! But it's holy truth, sir, I really *did* set by that boy, and wouldn't have cared to hurt him much; though I liked to keep my hand in, by flooring a fellow whenever I had a chance, and somehow

run against him pretty often. After he lived with you he was meeker than Moses, and I couldn't get him up to the mark nohow ; so I give him a chance to rest ; for I begun to feel streaked having the fun all to myself, seeing I couldn't rile him up noways. What sickness did he die of ? " he asked, abruptly, after a moment's silence. " I'd like to know all the particulars."

In as few words as possible Frank related all the circumstances connected with Bennie's accident, sufferings, and death, — dwelling particularly upon his peaceful state of mind, and his last message and care for Tom. As he repeated Bennie's words, the rough man leaned his head upon the

table, and hid his face in his hands. He neither spoke or moved when Frank ceased speaking, but remained motionless as a statue.

Hardly knowing whether it was best to add any advice or comments of his own, Frank also remained silent, until his eye rested on Bennie's Bible lying upon the window-sill near Tom. He reached over his shoulder for it, opened it and slowly read passages from the Old Testament, the Psalms and the gospels, — words of exhortation and entreaty to sinners ; promises for the penitent ; assurances of God's love and mercy ; and the account of Christ's sufferings and death for man's redemption.

Tom evidently gave strict attention.

though he gave no outward signs except occasionally drawing a heavy sigh, sometimes uttering almost a groan. As Frank closed the book, Tom raised his head, and reached out his hand for the Bible, and carefully placed it in his vest as he had done a few evenings before. It seemed to Frank as if he looked upon it more as a kind of talisman that would convey some good by the touch alone, than as a fountain of life, from which he could draw healing to his soul, or as a guide to teach him the right path to heaven.

“Do you read yourself in Bennie’s Bible, Tom?” Frank ventured to ask, as Tom still showed no disposi-

tion to speak. "It was his request that you should."

"Aye, aye, — you've told me that already, sir. I've not looked into it much yet, but intend to some rainy Sunday. I'm no great reader, was never much given to learning, and am too old to fret much about it now."

"Would you object to join a class in the Sabbath school? There is one established here at the Point, and I should be very glad if you would attend. I am acquainted with some of the teachers and, if you say so, will call for you to-morrow and introduce you to a gentleman that I think you will like as a teacher."

"Couldn't do it, sir. I'm nine-

teen years old, but look as if I was twenty-five, and don't fancy being made a laughing-stock by a parcel of young 'uns. I cry quits for any game like that ! ”

“ But the scholars are not all children, Tom : the school is for all who will come, old and young. You will find plenty there of your own age to keep you company, and need have no fear of ridicule, — at least, from those who attend the school ; they are too much interested themselves for that. As to any of your former associates, I should judge, by the decided stand you took the other night, that you cared very little for their opinion. I hope they would not hinder you.”

“ No, sir ; it’s little I’d care for the mind of that thieving, drunken set. I know them like a book, and nary a soul of them would dare wag his tongue against Tom Ryan, if he chose to bid them be silent. It’s not them I’m caring for, nor the laughing, nor the school ; but I’ll tell you the plain truth now, I don’t incline much to religion. I can get along very well without it, for I’m *an honest man, sir !* — I have been ever since I took that midnight bath in the salt water over twelve months ago. Some folks are born to be religious. Bennie was, — kinder took to it in the natural way ; and I’m glad he did, seeing the Lord didn’t intend to have him grow up. When

folks are ordained to die little shavers, like him, it's rather a consoling thing to have religion — especially if they get their legs broke, as he did : it makes them think less of their pains and aches, and keeps them on the lookout for a fair haven, and a new rig for the old hulk when the storm is over. You'll excuse me, sir; but I've studied this thing all out since I saw you, and when I'm ready to be a serious-minded man, and jine the church, I'll let you know; but you needn't spoil your eyes in keeping much of a lookout for that at present ! The land isn't in sight yet where I shall cast anchor and cultivate piety for a living ! I'm in

the peddling business, and mean to stick to that."

Frank could not suppress a smile at Tom's homely bluntness, while he felt it would be of no use to pursue the subject further at present. With a character and disposition like Tom's, he must act cautiously, striving, first of all, to gain his confidence by evincing a friendly interest in his daily occupation and welfare — hoping, in time, to exert an influence over him for better things.

As he rose to go, he held out his hand, saying :

" Well, Tom, I have felt gratified with my visit here this evening, and, if you will allow me, shall call again before long. I wish to assure

you of my interest in your welfare — not only for Bennie's sake, but also for your own. If I can be of service to you, in any way, let me know. If you feel disposed to call upon me in my own home, I shall give you a welcome as kind as you have extended to me to-night."

"Thank you, sir. Come any Saturday or Sunday, and you'll be welcome. I'm not given to visiting gentle folks, nor stepping round in fine houses. Ile and water wont mix, and Tom Ryan and soft carpets wouldn't know each other, — one or t'other of 'em would come off the worse for the acquaintance; so I guess I shall steer clear of all foolery, and stay at home. You can.

come here, and not be hurt by the mixing. I'll keep to my own house, and you'll find an open door and hearty welcome whenever you choose to come."

As we may only refer to Tom Ryan again, we will say now, that Frank continued his visits to Tom, at short intervals, for several years,—always welcomed with gruff heartiness, and always listened to with respect by Tom, even when he urged upon him the duty of repentance and prayer, or expressed his earnest wish to see him a Christian.

But Tom still held to the belief that "honesty" was all that he required to "pass him along," as he expressed it, through this world, or

to fit him for the next. "Religion is well enough for some folks," he said, "but I don't need it — at least while I'm in the tin and wooden ware trade. When I give that up, and retire into private life, I'll look into the thing and see what is to be made of it; and if I think it suits my case, I'll try a little of it, just to see how it works!"

CHAPTER IV.

WAR, AND FRANK'S DEPARTURE FOR WASHINGTON.

TEN years have passed since our first call at Cedar Brook, when we introduced our young friends, the Cliffords, to our readers. Come with me to-day, and we will see if any changes have taken place in their home.

It is the last of June, 1861, and Cedar Brook is somewhat altered in appearance. The house has been enlarged by a wing upon the southern side, and a broad piazza extends

across the front. The prairie-rose is replaced by a luxuriant woodbine, that nearly covers the end of the wing, and is trained across the piazza, hanging in graceful festoons its entire length. The grounds are unaltered, except by the growth and denser foliage of the trees and shrubs.

Entering the front gate, we miss our little Pep: he died three years ago, and was buried by Peter, at Edith's request, in one corner of the grounds. Passing over the lawn, and stepping upon the piazza, we find in his place a large Newfoundland, lying by the front door. He watches us closely as we approach, but does not move until we stoop to

pat his head ; he then rises and stands by our side, rubbing his great head against our hand, as if giving us a welcome as guests of his master.

We find all the family in the sitting-room, as before, with the addition of Elliot Wentworth and our old friend Mr. Scarrett. Mrs. Clifford reclines in the arm-chair — pale, thin, and evidently in a confirmed consumption. The last year has greatly altered her in appearance ; but her face is lovely still, her smile sweeter than ever. Beside her sits Lulu — her head resting on her mother's shoulder, her eyes fixed upon Frank, who is seated at the piano playing one of Beethoven's symphonies. Lulu is

still the pet of the family—cheerful, happy, loving, — still reminding one of a beautiful rosebud, with her fair complexion, and rich full tint upon cheek and lip. We can hardly realize that she is nearly fourteen years old.

Beside Frank stands Edith, Elliot, and Annie — all somewhat changed, but easily recognized. Edith has altered the least. She is still petite in form, but more slender than when a child ; wears her hair in its short, natural curls, without confinement by comb or net ; is still quick, nervous, full of fun, but not thoughtless or heedless as of old. Annie is more quiet, if possible, than ever — as thoughtful and painstaking. Her

mother's health has rendered it necessary for her to assume the office of housekeeper, — an office that accords well with her own tastes, and which she fills with satisfaction to all. She is never idle; and even now, as she stands by Frank, is mending a pair of gloves for her father.

Mr. Clifford sits by Winnie at the window, a paper in his hands. But he is not reading: his eyes are closed, and a look of sadness is on his face we have never seen there before. Mr. Scarrett looks very old and feeble; his hair is white, his form bent and trembling. His clasped hands rest upon the head of his cane; his face is turned toward Frank; his eyes are dim with tears.

Why is there such unwonted sadness resting upon all the faces of that little group?

There are none missing from their circle. All are in health, excepting the dear mother — and she, they had long known, was passing gently, but surely, to the land of rest. But none of them have ever suffered that thought to shade their brows, or cloud their faces in her presence. They have all striven to be cheerful and hopeful when with her, — talking freely, when she desired it, of her nearness to her heavenly home, and communing together of that heritage of light, that glorious abode beyond the tomb, where mists, and clouds, and doubt will be withdrawn forever.

Why, then, are they all so sad to-night? — all but Frank, upon whose face there rests an expression of happiness and peace, almost of inspiration, as, with a master-hand, he plays the soul-thrilling chords of the great composer.

Ah! it is from the same cause that has sent sadness and sorrow into thousands of happy homes throughout our land! Civil war, with all its horrors, had burst upon us. The startling news of the attack on Fort Sumter had called forth the noble, generous, most cherished sons of our country, to defend her rights upon the battle-field. The call of the President, on the fifteenth of April, 1861, for seventy-five thousand volun-

teers for three months' service, was fully responded to; and, with his father's consent, Frank immediately joined a drill company. This company was accepted, united to a Massachusetts regiment, and on the following morning Frank expected to leave Cedar Brook for the seat of war. What wonder, then, that there were heavy hearts and tearful eyes in that home-circle ?

The only son, the only brother, would leave them on the morrow for scenes of bloodshed, strife, and death. Would he return again to that peaceful home? *How* would come?—with the free, bounding step of health and strength, or wounded, maimed, lifeless? No wonder that his

gentle mother wept silent, bitter tears as she asked herself the question. *Her* days were indeed numbered. Could she endure the thought that he would not be by to close her eyes, or comfort his father and sisters when she was gone ? His father — how could he spare the son upon whom he had hoped to learn in his declining years ? That son might be sleeping in death, when *he* should be still hale and vigorous. His sisters, all loving him with a depth of affection that only a noble-hearted, affectionate brother like him could inspire — how could *they* live without him ? — how go forth into the world if he was not by to encourage and strengthen ?

Even Mr. Scarrett felt that death

would be divested of half its terrors, could that boy's bright face be near him in the last dread conflict. Winnie bowed her head upon her hands, and prayed that the dearest of all her sister's children, next to Edith, might be spared to return unharmed to them all. Oh! it was a hard, bitter struggle with each one! Yet, with the true, noble heroism of the mothers and sisters of our loved country, they never thought of dissuading Frank from his purpose — never pleaded their own love, or dependence upon him, as a reason for his remaining at home. From the very first announcement of his intention to join the army, they had not held him back, but bade him 'god-

speed' and blessed him,—his father only cautioning him against deciding upon his course too hastily, he being yet a minor, and of course exempt from duty if he chose to remain at home. "If you feel that God and your country call you, my son," said Mr. Clifford, "I will not discourage or prevent your enlisting, or withhold my consent because you are under age. Seek to know your duty, prayerfully; and if you feel there is need of your services, go—and the God of battles go with, protect, and bless you."

"Come, Edie, darling—let us sing once more our favorite song," said Frank, as he reached a piece of music from the stand beside him.

“It will be something to cheer me to-morrow, when I’m away, if I recall your sweet voice and the words of the song we have sung so often. Will you try?”

Edith involuntarily covered her face with her hands, and a half-suppressed cry of pain escaped her lips. Annie turned very pale, but she gently placed her arm round Edith’s waist, and whispered:

“Control yourself, for his sake, dear Edie. Sing if you can.”

Edith immediately raised her head, though her lips quivered, and her whole frame trembled like an aspen-leaf. Frank appeared not to notice her agitation; though his fingers trembled, as he ran them over the

keys for several minutes in prelude, giving her time to become calm and self-possessed ere they commenced.

The song was an old one, and is familiar to most persons — has undoubtedly been sung by many loving, aching hearts on the eve of separation ; and, in sadness and tears, they too have asked the question, “ When shall we meet again ? ”

A glance at Edith told Frank she was now equal to the effort ; and, striking a few chords, they sang —

“ When shall we two meet again ? I am going
Far from the home where my loved ones remain.
Like those pale lights down the Nile gently flowing,
I, too, may fade and return not again !
But though broad realms and the ocean divide us,
Shall we not ever be present in thought ?
And when the sweet voice of friendship’s denied us,

With dreams of the past shall our memories be
fraught ?

Distance may part us, but nothing can sever

Hearts, that, like ours, are united forever !

Ever in absence we'll constant remain :

Sister and friend, when shall we meet again ?

When shall we two meet again ?

“ Who will now tend to my birds and my flowers ?

Sing me at evening some sweet olden rhyme ?

Never again will those once happy hours

When we two wandered together, be mine :

Yet we shall meet though, it may be in spirit,

When cold is this hand that I'm clasping in thine ;

For we know there's a land that the pure may inherit,

And I, in my vigils, still pray may be mine.

Distance may part us, but nothing can sever

Hearts, that like ours, are united forever !

Ever in absence we'll constant remain :

Sister and friend, when shall we meet again ?

When shall we two meet again ? ”

As the last sound of their voices
died away, Mrs. Clifford, whose
strength was not equal to the con-

trol she had placed upon her feelings thus far, sank fainting in the arms of Lulu, and was carried by Mr. Clifford and Frank to her chamber. "Do not remain, my son," said Mr. Clifford ; "it will be better for you to take leave of your mother now : another fainting-fit like this would be of serious consequence to her. She is recovering slowly ; shorten the pang of parting, and do not agitate her if you can avoid it."

With tears streaming down his face, Frank bent over his mother, pressed his lips to her pale lips and cheek and brow, murmuring, "O ! my precious mother ! God keep you till my return, and grant that we may meet again. I cannot say fare-

well ! Bless me, mother ! — let your lips once more bless your only son.”

With a gentle sigh, Mrs. Clifford opened her eyes, and drew Frank’s head to her bosom, — her feeble hands smoothing his curls and caressing his face, as, years ago, she had done when he lay a helpless babe upon her breast.

“Yes, my son ; I *do* bless you, again and again. May God keep you in the day of battle ; be a shield between you and danger ; let not your enemies triumph over you ; save you to be the light of your boyhood’s home once more ; the comforter of your father, the protector of your sisters, when I am gone — ‘ But nevertheless, not my will, but thine, O Lord, be

done!’ If you should be called home to God first, Frank, I feel you will not watch long for me. I am even now close by the shore of eternity, — can almost hear the plashing of its waves as they come nearer and nearer around my feet. There seems but a step between me and death; and oh that you could be here to comfort me in that last hour! But no! no! — *not my will!* Kiss me, my child, my son, my darling boy! Receive your mother’s blessing, and may the God of Israel guard, guide protect you.”

One long, silent embrace, and Frank rose from his knees beside his mother, and hurried from the room. He did not return to the sit-

ting-room till he was calm again, and all traces of tears effaced. Here another parting, from Mr. Scarrett and Elliot, sorely tried his manliness, and forced Annie and Edith to leave the room to hide their feelings.

Once more alone, the little circle drew closer together, — Edith and Annie each side of Frank, and Lulu at his feet, while Mr. Clifford opened the sacred volume, and read from its holy pages words of comfort, faith, and hope. Gradually its soothing promises fell like healing balm upon their troubled hearts ; and when he closed the volume, and they all knelt with him in prayer, a sense of repose, of resignation to God's will, of a renewed power of endur-

ance, took the place of anguish and sorrow, and enabled each one to join audibly with Frank, as his father closed his petitions, in repeating the Lord's prayer, in clear, firm, unfaltering tones.

As they rose from their knees, Mr. Clifford took both of Frank's hands in his own, and, with streaming eyes and faltering lips, blessed and bade him good-by. One more silent embrace, one earnest look into each other's faces, one strong grasp of the hand, and father and son separated, to meet — where ?

It was Frank's request that all should take their leave of him that evening — that none should accompany him in town the next morning,

when he was to join his regiment. "I cannot say good-by at the depot," he said. "I must not feel unmanned at starting. Let all the sad scene of parting be within my own home. I wish no eyes to look upon my grief in the hour of separation from those I love. I must weep on my mother's bosom ; must kneel for my father's blessing ; must clasp in my arms my darling sisters, — and I wish no eye but God's to look upon me then."

Winnie followed Mr. Clifford, after a few words expressive of her love and grief at parting, leaving Frank alone with his sisters. Lulu and Annie each clung, weeping, to their brother's neck, too much dis-

tressed to utter one word. Frank soothed and encouraged them, promising to write often, and bidding them control their grief that they might the better comfort his father and mother.

“To you, Annie, especially, I commit my precious mother. I know I need not urge you to comfort and encourage her when I am gone. You are a careful nurse, a devoted child, a darling sister ; and all, everything, that a thoughtful mind or loving heart can do, or devise, I know you will perform. If I never return ” — Frank’s voice faltered — “ *you* will comfort her in the last hour, will close her dying eyes, will receive her last whispered words. Take my

place, then, Annie, — kiss her for me, repeat my name to her, and tell her how I loved her. If I should live to come back again, you will remember and repeat to me her last words for her absent boy, won't you, Annie?"

"O Frank! Frank! May you live to return and receive them yourself! How can we part from mother and you not be here to sustain us? You *must* come home before she dies; I could not live through it, if you were not here in that dreadful hour," cried Annie, her whole frame shaking with anguish as she tried in vain to regain her calmness.

Lulu's sobs were heart-rending as she clung to her brother's neck and repeated "Brother! brother!" Gent-

ly loosening her clasp, Frank kissed her fondly, and then embracing Annie, whispered :

“Go to your room now, Annie, and take Lulu with you. She will be sick to-morrow if she gives way to her grief so violently. Be careful of her, as well as of yourself, for our dear mother’s sake. One more kiss, sweet sisters, but not another word.”

With reluctant steps the weeping sisters left the room for their own chamber, and sobbed themselves to sleep in each other’s arms.

But where was Edith ? As the door closed after Annie, a stifled sob met Frank’s ear, and he turned to ascertain from whence it came. At the further side of the room, crouched

upon the floor, the heavy drapery curtain drawn close around her, her head buried in the cushion of the window-seat, was Edith, seeking in vain to suppress the low moans of anguish that ever and anon escaped her lips. Frank was beside her in an instant. With tender words he lifted her bowed head, took her in his arms, and seated himself in the arm-chair, holding her close to his bosom.

For several moments neither of them uttered a word — even Frank not attempting to restrain his own tears, that dropped fast on Edith's face, as she sought, by an almost superhuman effort, to control her grief. Gradually her sobs became less frequent, her tears ceased, and her ner-

vous hands relaxed their tight grasp on his. As she became more quiet, Frank spoke of his departure on the morrow calmly, freely — unburdening his whole heart, with all its hopes, fears, aspirations.

“Look at it calmly, dear Edie. There are many chances for my safe return home against one of my being killed, or even wounded. I am young and strong, and, for your sake, shall guard my health, and not run into unnecessary danger. There is One only, who can tell what may be in the future for any of us. To His kind care I commit myself; and while I am ready and willing to lay down my life for the good of my country, I can cheerfully trust that

life in His hands, knowing that no harm can come to me only as He wills. Life and death are in His hands, and I leave it all with Him. You must do the same. I may be sick or wounded; I may meet death on the battle-field; I may return unscathed, to lead, once more, a quite life at Cedar Brook. In either case I can truly say, 'Let it be as God wills.' I hope I am prepared for even a sudden death; am ready at any moment to yield into His hands the life He gave. There is but one thing, my darling sister, you can do for me, and that is more than aught else—*pray for me*. I shall need your prayers in the camp, on the field; in life, and in death. Upheld by

prayer, I shall be nerved for duty, come in what shape it may. Oh ! what a comfort it will be to me to remember I have Christian parents and sisters who are ever bearing me on their hearts before the mercy-seat ! Do you remember, Edie, it will be just one year next Sabbath since you and Annie were baptized ? ”

“ Yes, Frank, I remember it ; and also how bright and beautiful the whole world seemed to me then. The sun never shone so bright, the trees and flowers never wore such brilliant hues, or such a living green, as then ; the sky never looked so clear and unclouded ; and all nature seemed uniting in one vast anthem of praise to God. But to-day, to-night, how

dark, how gloomy, how sad, is all and everything ! A black pall is spread over the whole universe to me now ; a heavy, leaden weight presses on my soul, and I can scarcely refrain from hiding my face in terror, as if I was looking, even now, upon the face of the dead or dying.”

“ You must not indulge such feelings, Edith ; but keep a brave heart, and remember you are a soldier’s sister now. Think of the pride with which you will welcome me home ; of the interest you will feel in listening to my account of hard-fought battles, of victories, or of hair-breadth escapes ! When I come back to Cedar Brook I shall have much to say that will interest you all, and, I

hope, repay you for our short separation. Three months will pass quickly, Edith. Do you remember how sad you felt when mother went to Europe, and how sure you were she would never return ? ”

“ Yes, Frank. But God was better to me than my fears ; and you were by me to encourage me then.”

“ And cannot you trust Him now ? May He not be better than your fears again ? ”

“ I know He may ; still, I cannot look beyond the present. There is no rift in the cloud now ; not one beam of light, look which way I will. It is dark, all dark ! O, Frank ! ” and Edith suddenly threw her arms around his neck, “ something tells

me you will never return — never look upon Cedar Brook — never join our home-circle again. Forgive me for prophesying evil ; but I cannot refrain from speaking all my thoughts to you. I have done wrong in saying this, I know ; for I should encourage, not depress — strengthen, not unman you.”

“ Say all you think, Edith ; I am glad you have spoken freely. It gives me courage to speak of feelings I have not yet dared to express — hardly to acknowledge, to myself. I feel that there is a great uncertainty respecting my return. Of course every one, in going to war, must realize that, in one sense, it is taking his life in his hand and marching to

his death. I cannot disguise from myself, I will not hide it from you, that I have a strong impression I shall look upon our happy home here for the last time to-morrow. Do not feel so distressed, Edith," feeling her whole frame shiver in his arms. "This impression may be only what every one experiences in leaving home at the present time,—a natural depression of spirits at the thought of parting. You know I have hardly been out of sight of Cedar Brook since we moved here. I have never travelled further than New York ; and, of course, in the thought of a separation from you all, my feelings of excitement, and uncertainty with regard to the future,

must cause unwonted emotions, that I probably mistake for presentiments. Still, as we have referred to these things, let me speak freely, as I can to no one living but yourself, and leave with you a few directions in case I should not return."

Edith hid her face in Frank's bosom — moving not, nor speaking, as he, in few words, gave her directions respecting some letters and papers in his desk, and the disposal of a few articles of value, as keepsakes to his family and Elliot Wentworth, in the event of his death. Every word sank into her heart, every half-uttered wish was registered in her soul; and when he ceased speaking, she replied only by a mute caress.

The hour of midnight struck, and Edith was still in her brother's arms, but in a heavy sleep from grief and exhaustion. Carefully placing her upon the sofa, and covering her with a shawl, he kept watch beside her till early dawn — too busy with his own crowding thoughts to seek rest in his own room.

At five o'clock, Peter passed the door to awaken his young master, whom he supposed was in bed. Frank stepped lightly to the door, and pointed to Edith, placing his finger upon his lips. Peter understood him, and turned away his face to hide his tears, when Frank knelt for a moment beside his favorite sister, gently kissed her pale cheek,

and then softly lifted a curl from her temple, severed it from its fellows, and placed it next his bosom. Loosing the heavy drapery over the windows, he carefully darkened the room, looked earnestly at the pictures, the open piano, the books, and work scattered around, as if daguerreotyping the room and every article it contained upon his memory; and then, with quivering lip and tearful eyes, followed Peter to the carriage.

Bridget was at the gate, her honest face deluged with tears, as she held out her hand to bid him good-by. Pointing toward the house as a sign to prevent any outburst of grief, he thanked her for all her kindness to him and faithfulness to his mother,

telling her he hoped she would remain at Cedar Brook till he returned.

“ We cannot do without you, Bridget; your services are invaluable to mother, and we all appreciate them fully. Look in my room, after breakfast, and you will find a little package, on my dressing-table, directed to you. Keep it for my sake, and be assured that, wherever I am, I shall remember your kindness to me and fidelity to my dear mother. God bless you. Good-by.”

Bridget seized Frank's extended hand, and kissed it; — watched the carriage as long as it was in sight, then ran into the barn, climbed the ladder to the loft, threw herself upon the hay, and cried till she was tired.

“Och ! and it’s the last time I’ve looked upon the handsome lad, I’m shure, this day. The blessed Virgin rest his sowl if he’s killed in battle with them cursed seceshioners — the bloody, black-hearted murthurers ! Let them fight their own nagurs, and not be sending after master Frank, with his handsome face and curly hair, to shoot and kill and murther. Oh, the miserable plantations, with their bloody hounds, and chains, and whips ! — may Saint Peter and Paul, and all the holy fathers, fry them all in purgatory, with not a mass to save their souls ! Faith ! and was I the pope I’d excommunicate them all in a hape — the thieving, bloody, craven set !

May the blessed Mary dance them on hot coals till their feet are blistered and they ax pardon, on their knees, for tooting war all over the land ! *I* know what the craven sowl's will do to master Frank, — they'll set him up like a target, and shoot at him till his brains are split, and he have no sense left to come home again. O, mavourneen ! mavourneen ! — that I should live to see the day he wasn't a President, but only a cowl'd corpse with a cannon-ball though his head ! Saint Patrick and Saint Nicholas defend the boy, and bring him home with the stars and stripes flying all around him, and the band playing Erin-go-bragh and Yankee Doodle ! ”

CHAPTER V.

EDITH'S JOURNEY TO WASHINGTON.

“It is a fortnight to-day since Frank wrote us he expected to leave Washington for Virginia,” said Edith to Annie, as they sat together in their mother’s room, while Mrs. Clifford lay asleep, after one of her exhausting spells of coughing. “Is it not strange that he has not written again? My heart beats painfully at the sound of every step upon the piazza. I long, yet fear, to hear from him. Can it be that he was at Centreville, and wounded or taken

prisoner in that terrible battle at Bull Run ? My very soul is sick as I think of it."

" You distress yourself needlessly, Edith ; and, I fear, trouble mother by your constant anxiety. I know, dear, you cannot help being very anxious," added Annie, observing that Edith's eyes filled with tears, and her fingers trembled so she could hardly hold her needle ; " but you must try to feel more hopeful. Your anxiety for Frank has robbed you of all your elasticity ; your eyes are heavy, your cheeks are pale, and you really look as if you had been sick. I observed mother gazing at you this morning, till her eyes filled with tears, and her face wore such an ex-

pression of anguish that I could hardly bear to look at her. She understands your anxiety, and the knowledge of your suffering only adds to her own, causing her thoughts to rest more constantly on Frank, and the sad probability that they have parted forever. On her account, endeavor — at least in her presence — to appear at ease, and converse as much as possible on subjects foreign to Frank and the war.”

“ You are right, Annie. I *must* control my feelings, and try to hope for the best ; at any rate, keep all my fears within my own breast when I am with dear mother. Just see how pale she is ! — how almost

transparent her delicate hand looks as it rests on the counterpane ! She surely cannot be with us long ; and selfish indeed it would be in me to add one drop of sorrow to her cup. No ! — I *will* look cheerful, and strive to feel so” ; and Edith pressed back her hair from her throbbing temples, and tried to smile. But it was a sad, sad smile, lingering only around the lips, leaving the eyes heavy and dull, and causing Annie’s lip to quiver, as she looked at her sister, and understood fully the depth of filial and sisterly love so strongly contending in that young heart for the mastery. She however gave no outward sign of sympathy save by

a more tender tone of voice, as she replied :

“ That is like your own sweet self, Edie ; — you have too unselfish a spirit to cause mother, or any one else, a moment’s needless suffering. Forgive me if I seemed to reprove you. I did not intend to ; but my heart ached to see you look so sorrowful, and know that mother divined the cause. I feared it might prove injurious to her. But hark ! Is not that Peter’s step in the hall ? Perhaps he has a letter. I will go and ask him.”

“ No, no ! ” whispered Edith, pressing Annie back in her chair as she attempted to rise ; “ let *me* go — you stay with mother. I will call

you if there is any news. I should lose all control if I was kept in suspense five minutes longer."

With hurried, but noiseless steps, Edith left the room, and met Peter at the foot of the stairs.

"A letter from Frank?" she inquired, as she observed he held one in his hand. "Is it for me?"

"No, miss; it's directed to your father—postmarked Washington. I reckon it is from the young master by that;" and Peter's honest face glowed with pleasure as he handed her the letter.

Hastily glancing at the superscription, she saw it was not Frank's handwriting; and her heart sank within her, as she almost sprang

into the library, and laid it upon the table before her father. Mr. Clifford's countenance changed as he glanced at the direction, and quickly tore open the envelope.

Edith, trembling from head to foot, sank into a chair opposite her father, and, with clasped hands and a face from which every particle of color had fled, watched him as he read. A spasm of pain contracted his features, and he leaned his head upon the table as, without a word, he handed Edith the letter. Her eye ran over the page, seeming to take in the whole contents at a glance; and yet she forced herself to read it slowly through the second time before she spoke or moved. We



FRANK WOUNDED AT BULL RUN. — F.



will look over her shoulder as she reads :

“MR. CLIFFORD — Dear Sir : — I write to inform you that your son, Frank Clifford, was wounded in the late battle of Bull Run. Early in the engagement, his left arm was badly shattered as he was fighting bravely, shouting, ‘Down with the rebels ! For God and my country !’ He had scarcely spoken the words, when he was struck the second time, and probably fainting, sank to the ground. My brother was near him when he fell, and with some difficulty bore him from the ranks, and laid him outside the lines. After the battle, my brother found him living, but very weak from pain and loss of

blood. He was conveyed with others of the wounded to Washington, and, by my brother's request, to my house — knowing my husband and myself would pay him every attention. We immediately sent for a surgeon, who considered it necessary to amputate his arm. He bore the amputation without a groan, and until yesterday the physician considered he was doing well. Since then a change has taken place, — fever has set in, — and we deem it necessary to send for yourself, or some member of his family, thinking, in the event of his death, it will be a satisfaction to you if you can be with him in his last hours.

“May He who holds the lives of all men in his hands, spare your noble

boy to yet be the stay and comfort of your declining years !

“ With the truest sympathy of one who has two brothers and an only son in the army, and can therefore well understand the anxiety and sorrow of Mr. Clifford's parents and sisters, I remain

Yours, most truly,

MRS. L. A. ATHERTON.

WASHINGTON, JULY 29th, 1861.”

Carefully folding the letter, Edith placed it in the envelope, laid it upon the table, and then, with tottering steps, turned toward the door. A heavy fall aroused Mr. Clifford, and he sprang toward his child, who had fainted and fallen across the threshold. Raising her in his arms,

he bore her to the sofa, and rang the bell. It was immediately answered by Annie, who had heard the fall and ran down stairs, half divining the cause.

“Go up stairs to mother,” said Annie to Lulu, who had just come in from a walk. “If she is awake do not alarm her: merely say Edith is not well, and I will be up stairs in a short time. No! no! — ask no questions now, Lulu. Edith has overtasked herself, but will be better soon. Be very careful not to agitate mother in the least. Keep calm; and, if she did not hear Edith fall, do not speak of her fainting. I can trust you; — you will control yourself?”

“ You may depend upon that,” answered Lulu, who had much of Annie’s quiet self-possession, and was not so easily excited as Edith.

Applying the usual restoratives, Mr. Clifford and Annie had the satisfaction of seeing Edith soon unclose her eyes, and, though pale and weak, able in a short time to sit up, and even read the letter again with composure, and consult with her father as to what was best to be done.

“ You will go to Washington directly, father, wont you? Had not Annie better accompany you — she is such a good nurse, she will be more useful than any one else?” inquired Edith, in a dry, husky voice,

cold chills passing over her, and making her shiver like an ague-fit.

“How can I leave mother?” pleaded Annie. “She is too feeble for me to leave now. I would gladly go; but ought I? Would you not be willing to go in my stead?” she added, passing her arm around Edith’s waist, and taking her cold hand in hers.

“*I!—may* I go? Will you let me? *Willing!*—O Annie! It almost killed me to even propose your going, I longed so to go myself; but I dared not ask to go. I thought you would never consent; would think me too nervous, too weak, too good-for-nothing. May I go, father? Can you trust me?” and Edith gazed in her

father's face in almost speechless agony.

“ Yes, my dear child ; you shall go. I *can* trust you. Now the first shock is past, I know you will have all the calmness and self-control necessary for whatever duty or trial you may be called upon to meet. Lie down awhile ; — I must go and break the sad news to your mother. Annie, come with me. I will send Lulu to sit by Edith.”

Kissing the still pale lips of his darling child, Mr. Clifford left her and went up stairs, with Annie, to his wife's room. She was sitting up, looking somewhat refreshed by her quiet sleep ; but her quick eye detected something unusual in her hus-

band's manner, as he drew a chair beside her, notwithstanding his efforts to appear composed.

“What has happened?” she asked, not replying to her husband's remarks upon her unusually bright looks. “Have you heard from Frank? — is he well?”

With a powerful effort, Mr. Clifford compelled himself to answer calmly, in his usual tone, “Yes; I have received a letter to-night. He was in the last battle, and received a severe wound in his left arm. He was conveyed to the house of the sister of a fellow-soldier, in Washington, where he is well cared for, and receives every attention he could have in his own home. I have been

thinking that it might be your wish, and a gratification to him, if I should go to Washington myself to-morrow, and see how he is, — perhaps take Edith with me ; she might be of some assistance to Mrs. Atherton in nursing him ; at any rate, I know Frank would like to see her. What do you say ? ”

For a brief moment Mrs. Clifford did not answer, but leaned forward, looking into her husband's eyes as though she would read his very soul. He could hardly bear that searching look ; but he endeavored to meet her gaze calmly, without betraying his own anxious feelings.

A mother cannot be deceived. An invisible but never-broken tie unites

her ever to the child of her bosom ; a responsive chord echoes the pressure of any heavy pain or sorrow resting upon that child, though oceans intervene, or continents divide. So with Mrs. Clifford. Her mother-heart told her Frank was in danger, perhaps dying ; and, with quivering lips, she uttered, slowly :

“ Tell me the worst, now, — I can bear it. Is he — dead ? ”

“ No, my dear wife ; our boy is living still, but may not be long. He is dangerously ill ; and this letter from Mrs. Atherton will explain it all to you. Can you spare Edith and myself for a few days, that we may go to him ? ”

“ Yes ; — go, go ! Do not delay one

hour ! Give not one thought to me. Annie and Lulu will be here. I shall require nothing that they cannot perform. Go now, Annie dear, and pack Edith's trunk. Put in wine, jellies, — everything that you can think of that will be of service or comfort to Frank. Lulu will arrange a valise for your father ; and they can take the early morning train for New York."

Quickly, but quietly, every preparation was made for their departure ; and early on the morrow Mr. Clifford and daughter were on their way.

How different everything appeared to Edith, now, from the same scenery upon which she looked with so much pleasure, for the first time, as she

journeyed with her Aunt Winnie to New York, on her way to Illinois. Then, the cars seemed to fly over the ground with incredible speed; her whole attention was absorbed in watching the constantly changing panorama of wood and plain, rivers and towns — her quick eye noting every object as they swiftly appeared and disappeared on their rapid course. Now, how wearily the cars dragged their slow length along! how much, to her impatient spirit, their revolving wheels seemed like the dull, laggard pace of a funeral procession! Then, the beautiful scenery charmed her eye, and called forth constant exclamations of delight. Now, everything jarred upon her feelings, and

she wept because the sun shone, the flowers bloomed, the birds sang. How could all nature look so gay when Frank was suffering — perchance dying ! Better would it accord with her feelings, if the heavens were hung in black, and the earth dressed in mourning.

A little child near her laughed and clapped his hands as something attracted his childish fancy ; but Edith shuddered involuntarily, and covered her face. A careless remark of a passenger respecting the last battle, almost forced a scream from her lips. Indeed, all she heard, everything she looked upon, seemed only to add to her misery. But Edith would allow herself no expres-

sion of such feelings. One look at her father's troubled face nerved her to conceal her own sorrow, and seek to comfort him. Long before they reached New York, she was endeavoring to divert his thoughts by pointing out objects of interest, or asking questions respecting the different places they passed.

They made no stay on the way longer than was required for change of cars, and on the afternoon of the second day arrived in Washington. Taking a carriage, they drove immediately to Mrs. Atherton's, and were ushered by the servant into the drawing-room, while he went to announce their arrival to his mistress.

CHAPTER VI.

FRANK'S DEATH.

THROWING aside her veil, Edith cast a nervous glance around the room ; and, even in that moment of anxiety, could not refrain from noticing the air of refinement and cultivated taste pervading the whole apartment. Pictures, statuary, articles of virtu, books, engravings, a piano, harp, and flute, all bespoke the owner's tastes ; while rich vases on the mantel and pier-tables, filled with flowers exquisitely arranged, perfumed the air with their fragrance.

Edith had hardly completed her survey, when the door opened, and a tall, queenly-looking lady entered. She extended a hand of cordial welcome to Mr. Clifford, and kissed Edith with a mother's tenderness,—saying :

“I am very glad to see you, sir ; and you too, my sweet child. You have not come one hour too soon. Your son is impatiently awaiting your arrival : every hour has seemed a day since I wrote. Lay aside your hat and shawl, my dear, and rest on the sofa while I show your father to Mr. Clifford's room. I cannot allow you both to visit him at once ; his strength would not be equal to the excitement. He is very weak, and

I fear you will find him greatly changed; though the doctor thinks he may continue several days yet."

"Then there is no hope?" said Mr. Clifford, in a constrained tone, — a cold sweat starting like beads on his forehead, in his effort to appear calm.

"The doctor says there is none. But, my dear sir, death has no terrors for your noble boy. He knows his situation, and has but one wish, one prayer now, and that is to see you and his sister Edith before he dies. Is not this that darling sister? I should know her by his description. Hush, my child!" said Mrs. Ather-ton, as Edith burst into tears. "You must, you will be calm, for his sake.

His very life depends upon perfect quiet and freedom from all agitation. Weep freely here, if you will — tears will relieve your over-burdened heart; but when you meet your brother, it must be with at least outward calmness, and without tears.”

Tenderly placing a cushion beneath Edith's head, and whispering, “Weep freely now; you shall be undisturbed for a while,” Mrs. Atherton led the way across the wide hall, up the front stairs, to Frank's room. Pointing to the bed, Mrs. Atherton closed the door, and left the father and son alone.

In half an hour she returned to the drawing-room, and took a seat upon the sofa beside Edith. With-

out a word she raised her tenderly, drew her head upon her bosom, and lifted the damp hair from her throbbing brow, turning her soft curls around her finger.

Gradually Edith wept less violently, her agitation ceased, and in a short time she lay perfectly still. Thinking she had wept herself asleep, Mrs. Atherton remained motionless, hoping she would awake refreshed. But Edith was not asleep: she was thinking of Frank; trying to comprehend the whole, dreadful meaning of those few words, "there is no hope;" trying to accustom herself to the agonizing reality that she must part with Frank, — must henceforth live without him.

Suddenly passing her arm around Mrs. Atherton's neck, she whispered, "Tell me all about him, — what he has suffered ; what he has said ; how he feels about dying, — all, everything your own heart tells you, I can wish to know. I can bear it now.'

Complying with her request, Mrs. Atherton gave a minute account of his arrival at her house, after a painful journey from Centreville ; of the unflinching courage with which he bore the amputation of his arm, which was too badly shattered to be set ; and also of the suffering caused by a bullet-wound in his side — the ball too deeply embedded to allow of extraction in his weak state.

She repeated his conversation with her respecting his parents and sisters,—especially of his favorite sister Edith, of whom he never tired of speaking ; going back, in his memory, to their childish days, when they hunted squirrels together, built wharves and storehouses by the “ basin,” or gathered flowers and berries in the fields and woods. Then he spoke of his strong presentiments of death before he left home ; of his certainty that he had looked for the last time upon Cedar Brook ; had taken his final leave of his mother, Annie, and Lulu, but that he still clung to the belief he should see his father and Edith once more.

“ ‘ I can die peacefully,’ he said,

‘ if I can be permitted to see my own dear Edie again, — can know her hand will close my eyes, her voice commend my departing soul to God. I have no fear of death : for me to die is gain. My peace is made with God. I gave myself to him, without reserve, nearly seven years ago, and have not known a day since when I have not renewedly consecrated myself to him. Jesus is all-in-all to me ; and I know he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, until the last, great day. I have not a doubt or a fear, but am ready and willing to go when he calls. I have but one earthly wish, and that is to see my father and sister ; but in that, as in all

things else, 'not my will, O God, but thine be done.'

"Surely, my child," continued Mrs. Atherton, "you have much to comfort you in this devoted affection of your dear brother. Few sisters experience such pure, unselfish love as Frank evinces toward you. His touching allusions to you in our many conversations have made me weep like a child, and I know how fondly you are cherished, and how close is the bond that unites you to him. The day after his arrival here, he requested me to hand him a little paper sowed into the breast of his flannel shirt. At his request I opened it for him, and took out a curl of soft, dark hair, like your

own. He looked at it tearfully, then pressed it to his lips, murmuring, ' Dear, precious Edie ! I cut this from her temples just as I was leaving home. She cried herself to sleep in my arms, and I sat by her till daylight, when I was forced to go. I cut off this lock without waking her, and have worn it in my bosom ever since. If I should never see her again, lay it on my breast when I am buried, and tell her how I longed to see her before I died.'

" I promised him I would. But now he will see you himself, and tell you all that I cannot."

Nearly two hours elapsed before Mr. Clifford returned to the drawing-room. His face bore traces of

tears, but he was calm, almost cheerful. "I left Frank asleep," he said, in answer to Edith's look of inquiry. "He is very weak, and cannot bear any excitement. The nurse is with him, and has promised to call you when he wakes, if he is able to see you. I met Mr. Atherton in crossing the hall, and he insists upon our making his house our home while we remain. I will order our trunks to be sent here from the hotel, and then be ready, any moment, to assist you in the care of Frank."

Mr. Atherton came in, and greeted Edith as cordially as his wife had done. She no longer felt as if among strangers; for the quiet, unpretending kindness of Mr. Atherton and

his noble wife removed all feeling of restraint, and she soon felt perfectly at home. After supper, as Frank was still asleep, Mrs. Atherton returned with Édith and her father to the drawing-room.

“Are you fond of music?” she asked, as Edith approached the harp and touched her fingers to the strings.

“Yes, very. Can you play upon the harp? Would it wake, or disturb Frank, if you should let me hear a few notes? I have seen a harp, but never heard one played upon.”

“It will not disturb him in the least. His room is over the library, on the opposite side of the hall, and,

if you will close the door, he cannot hear a sound."

Drawing the harp toward her, Mrs. Atherton swept her fingers across its strings in a short but thrilling prelude, and then, in a sweet, subdued voice, sang song after song, with a power and pathos that seemed to express the very thoughts and hidden emotions of Edith's soul. Soothed, calmed, strengthened by that sweet music, Edith felt prepared to follow the nurse, with steady step and perfect outward tranquillity, to her brother's room.

Hesitating but one moment, on the threshold, to accustom her sight to the darkened room, she closed the door, and with noiseless step ap-

proached the bed. One kiss, one pressure of her cheek to his, one grasp of his thin, feverish hand, one word only — “Frank !” — and Edith knelt beside her brother, astonished at her own calmness, wondering at her own power of self-control.

For a long time she knelt there, her face close to his, her hand smoothing back his thick curls, her ear listening to his short, quick respiration, not one word uttered by either — every thought, every wish, for the time being merged in the one happy consciousness that they were once more together.

Beautiful, touching, such love as this between a brother and a sister !

Earth nor heaven knows no affection holier or purer !

“ Draw aside the curtain,” said Frank, at last. “ I want to look at your face, dear Edie. Oh, how hungry I have been to see you once more, to hear your voice, to know you were beside me ! God has granted my prayer at last, blessed be his holy name ! ”

Edith lifted the heavy drapery, and stood beside her brother. Ah ! what an eager gaze the sick boy bent upon the sweet face before him ! — how earnestly he scanned every well-known feature ! — how quickly marked the traces of mental anguish she had suffered in the few past weeks and days, so plainly visible

in her pale lip and cheek, and heavy eyes!

And Edith, — how painfully her heart beat and her limbs trembled, as she looked upon the wasted features, the burning cheek, the glistening eyes, the broad, marble-white brow of her idolized brother, — all telling so surely of intense suffering and approaching death!

“Come nearer, Edith. Let me take my fill in gazing upon your sweet face. I told you I was hungry for the sight of you, — yes, *hungry, starving!* No other words can express the intense longing I have had, as night after night, day after day, I have laid here, with but one thought, one wish, one prayer ever in my soul

and on my lips, — ‘ Father in heaven! spare me till Edie comes, that I may die in her arms.’ *I knew you would come.* I took my final leave of all the rest that last night at home, knowing we should meet no more this side of heaven. But I never relinquished the thought of seeing *you*. Something told me we should meet again. You are here! and now I shall die content. Kiss me, sister! Now drop the curtain, and sit close beside me. I have much to say and must talk about while I have strength.”

Wetting his parched lips, Edith closed the curtain, and, with his hand in hers, listened in silence as he gave her renewed messages of

love to his mother, sisters, Elliot, and Gracie Wentworth. He also sent an earnest request to Tom Ryan that he would attend the Sabbath school, and seek religion for himself.

“I think he has changed for the better since Bennie’s death ; but he is still far from living as he ought. He still thinks that ‘honesty’ is better than religion, and sees no necessity of any other preparation for eternity. Interest yourself in his behalf, and ask Elliot to call upon him with you. There is but little to encourage you, I know ; but do not give him up : you may be the means of leading him at last in the right path. Coarse, uneducated, unprepossessing as he is, I have some

how felt a deep interest in him; and I bequeath to you that care of his spiritual interest that I am called upon now to relinquish. Be faithful, and he may yet be added to those who will be stars in your crown of rejoicing in the day when God shall judge the world. In that great day we shall find many souls washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb who have been taken from among the poor, the outcast, the most degraded; and they will stand, perhaps, nearer the throne, than those we have accounted as shining lights in the world, or have held high rank even in the church of Christ below."

"I have no doubt of it, Frank; and if possible will fulfil your wishes

in regard to Tom Ryan. If I feel discouraged, I will recall your words at this hour, and seek for renewed strength to persevere. But you must converse no more at present. I am your nurse, and shall watch with you to-night; and, in virtue of my office, shall lay my commands upon you, and prohibit your speaking again for an hour. By-and-by I will read you a few verses, if you are able to listen; but for the present, quiet and rest will be the best medicine. Let me smooth your pillow, and then you must try to sleep."

Exhausted from talking, Frank closed his eyes, and soon sank into an unquiet slumber, — often starting and looking earnestly at Edith, as

if fearful it was the nurse, and not her, by his side, or that his memory of her presence was but the unreal phantom of a feverish dream. At such times Edith would press her lips to his forehead, and grasp his hand more firmly in hers, till, reassured, he would close his eyes with a sigh of relief, murmuring, "Edie! Edie!"

The nurse and Mrs. Atherton each looked into the room, and urged Edith, by signs, to seek some rest, and allow them to take her place; but she only shook her head, and motioned to be left alone.

Two hours past midnight; and Frank still slept, but more quietly. Edith watched every feature, trying

to read some signs of hope in his sunken face. The fever flush had passed away, and a deathly paleness lay upon cheek and brow; but still he slept. Would he wake refreshed? Was this change a token of good, or ill? Edith could not tell. She had never witnessed death, except in Bennie's case; and with him the change was only from paroxysms of extreme agony to long fainting-fits—in one of which he passed away.

Three, four o'clock. Edith now became alarmed; for the hand resting in hers was cold, his forehead damp with moisture, his breath slow and labored. Softly loosing his hand, she raised the gas, and bent over him. She could not be mistaken;—

Frank was sinking fast ! With hurried step she crossed the entry, and opened the door of her father's room. Mr. Clifford was not in bed, but dressed and sitting by the window, his head resting against the frame.

He had fallen into a light slumber ; but Edith's hurried whisper, " Father ! come ! — Frank is dying ! " aroused him in an instant ; and drawing her arm within his, he hastened to his child.

Frank opened his eyes as they entered, and held out his hand.

" Father ! — Edith ! I'm going home. Kiss mother for me. Say to her, death had no terrors for her boy ; all is joy, — joy unspeakable and full of glory ! Hark ! — listen

to that heavenly music ! — see those glorious forms ! Yes, even so, come, Lord Jesus, come ! ”

After a brief silence he added, “ Raise me, Edie. Lay my head on your bosom, and bend your face close to mine. Let me look at you once more. Light ! — more light ! — I cannot see you Edie ! ” and the glazed eyes of the dying boy vainly sought to look once more upon his sister’s face.

“ Lay him back upon the pillow, my dear Edie,” said Mr. Clifford, his tears dropping upon the face of his dead child. “ Frank is at rest : our tears cannot disturb him now. Come to my arms, Edith, and let us weep together ; but not in murmuring, not

in bitterness ; for it is a Father's voice that has called him home, a Father's hand that has removed him from us. He can come no more to us, but we shall go to him. 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ; for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.' 'All our appointed time will we wait, till our change comes.' May we, then, be as ready and willing to depart as was our darling Frank, — as willing to lay aside this our earthly tabernacle, 'knowing we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Go to your room now my child, for an hour's rest, while I call the nurse and Mrs. Atherton to

assist me in performing the last sad office for your brother. We will make every arrangement to depart with his remains in the first train, for home."

Another sad, weeping journey for Edith,—another wearisome counting of the slow, tedious hours! How many, many journeys like this have been taken by the wives, mothers, and sisters of our land, with weeping eyes and bleeding hearts, as they have borne to their darkened homes the sacred remains of those whose lives have been sacrificed in this the most dreadful, heart-sickening war of brother with brother that ever devastated the face of the earth! When will the time come when wars

shall cease, — when man shall love his fellow-man, — when all, living and acting as the children of one common Father, shall learn war no more; but “Peace shall fold her wings o’er hill and valley,” and songs and praise shall take the place of sorrow, sighing, and discord ?

How expressive are the words of that old Hebrew dirge: “Mourn for the mourners, and not go for the dead; for they are at rest, but *we* in tears !”

’Tis even so in this our country’s hour of trial. Our tears flow, our souls sink within us, as we receive, almost daily, tidings of those who have fallen on the battle-field. But still we weep far bitterer tears over

our disappointed hopes, our crushed hearts, our desolate homes. Thousands of strong arms, and brave, noble hearts are lying powerless and still, while wakeful, watching eyes are keeping sad virgils in the homes that will know them no more forever ; and thousands more will go forth to suffer, bleed, and die, ere this cruel strife shall end, and the dark shadow of war be lifted from our midst.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.

It was a bleak, cold day in January. Closely wrapped in cloak and furs, Edith was just entering a store in Washington street, when she heard a quick step behind her, and a familiar voice exclaim :

“ Edith ! — this must be Edith Clifford ! Surely I am not mistaken. I should know that face anywhere ! ”

Turning quickly, Edith in an instant recognized her Uncle John, who grasped her extended hand with hearty warmth as he repeated, “ I

am not mistaken, then? I knew I could not be. I caught a glimpse of your face as you threw aside your veil, and felt assured it must be you, notwithstanding you were a mere child when I saw you last. How are you all at home? Your mother—is she living still?”

“Yes, uncle; but she is very feeble. This cold weather has increased her cough, and she is only able to sit up an hour or two during the day. Annie never leaves her, and I only go from home when it is absolutely necessary. I have but one errand to attend to for Lulu, and if you will wait for me we will return home immediately. Mother was saying, only yesterday, that she feared

you had not received Aunt Winnie's letter, or we should have heard from you before this."

"I did receive it, but felt so anxious to see your mother once more, that I concluded to come myself, instead of writing."

Seated in the car, Edith made many inquiries after her aunt and cousins, and also of their pleasant prairie home.

"Does the farm look as it did when I was there, — have you made any alterations?"

"Our house looks about the same, except in being somewhat improved by a few coats of paint and a new set of blinds. But the old sheds are removed, and I have two large barns

built in their place. A broad avenue has been made from the house to the road, and bordered on both sides by thrifty trees. The flower-garden has been enlarged to about twice its original size, and is fenced in by a thick hedge of Osage orange. My two oldest boys are married, and settled on farms of their own. Mary is engaged to a merchant in St. Louis, and Willie and Sue will soon be the only children left at home. They are all anxious to see you, and sent many messages of love and urgent requests that you would visit them again soon."

"I should like to do so, but cannot think of leaving home at present. Mother is so feeble that I feel

uneasy if I am obliged to be away from her for only a few hours."

Uncle John was greatly overcome by the change in Mrs. Clifford's looks, and felt, with Edith, that she would not live to see another spring. He remained at Cedar Brook nearly a week,—his presence a source of comfort and support to them all, especially to Mr. Clifford, who appeared much broken since Frank's death, and, added to this, his anxiety respecting the failing health of his wife.

Elliot was a constant visitor, and so was Gracie, who was almost inseparable from Lulu, — hardly a day passing without their seeing each other. Mr. Wentworth and his wife

often came in of an evening, and helped divert the thoughts of Mr. Clifford from dwelling too much upon his loss.

Mr. Scarrett did not long survive his "boy," as he always called Frank. When his summons came, it was sudden and without pain. He was sitting by the window, watching his wife as she arranged some plants upon a flower-stand near him. She asked him some question respecting one of the plants, but he made her no reply. She repeated her question, but still he did not answer. Somewhat surprised at his inattention, she turned to ascertain the cause, when she saw that his eyes were fixed, his features rigid, and his fore-

head white and colorless as the thin locks that rested upon it! Gently, without a sigh or a groan, the old man had passed to his rest.

A few days after Uncle John left Cedar Brook, Winnie was sitting in her own room, her thoughts busy with the changes that had taken place in her sister's family within a few months, when a knock at the door aroused her from her reverie. Answering her call, "Come in!" Edith entered, closed the door, and drawing a low foot-stool close to Winnie, laid her head upon her lap.

"What is it, Edie?" Winnie asked, as she stooped to kiss Edith's flushed cheek, — "are you troubled?"

— has anything occurred to annoy you ? You look sad.”

“ I feel sad, auntie ; for I have just returned from witnessing a scene I shall not soon forget. I have been with Elliot this afternoon to call upon Tom Ryan, who sent me word this morning that he was very anxious to see Elliot and myself. After dinner we started for the Point, and found Tom at home, pacing up and down his room, evidently much disturbed and impatient for our arrival. In answer to Elliot’s inquiry if he were sick or in trouble, he replied :

“ ‘ It’s not for myself that I’m wanting you, — I’m well enough, and above-board — likely to keep my head out of water for some time yet ; —

but I want your help for a poor, miserable fellow that, to all appearance, is near his end, and is scared to death at the idea of his ropes being cut, and wants some one to pray with him. I'm no hand at such business, and he says he wont have none of your ministers; so I made bold to send for you — thinking maybe you'd be willing to say the right word to the poor soul, and ease him off a little in his last hour.'

“ ‘ Who is he, Tom ? and where is he ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ His name is Si Short — Bennie Mead's old master; and he is in an old shanty of an house in the next street. I ran foul of him last night, and picked him up out of a cellar

he had tumbled into. He struck his back in falling, and I reckon he broke it, for he's not been able to move since. I lifted him in my arms and carried him to a house near by, and then went for a doctor. But he didn't stay long. He said he could do nothing for him, — the fellow must die; 'twarnt in man to save him. So he left him some quieting-drops, and went home again. I stayed with the old reprobate all night, and did what I could to ease him. But he screeched and screamed and swore till I was most crazed, and couldn't stand it any longer; then I sent for you. He's considerable quieter now; but I judge from his looks that he wont weather it long.'

“ Rather reluctantly I followed Tom and Elliot to a miserable looking dwelling, filled with untidy, coarse-featured women, and noisy, dirty children. Passing by three or four rooms, occupied by as many different families, we followed Tom up a dark, broken stairway, through a narrow entry, to a low, back chamber over the woodshed. In one corner, on a dirty straw bed, covered with a ragged patch-quilt, lay the most hideous looking object that I ever saw. His face seemed scarred and defaced by the traces left of every evil passion, bloated with habitual drunkenness, and distorted by fierce bodily and mental agony.

“ Involuntarily I turned away,

hardly able to endure the sight. Tom approached the bed, and said :

“‘Look here, Si, — I’ve brought you some one at last who can pray with you. You’d better take my advice, and make the most of your time. You’d better, too, be quiet as possible ; for if you screech and swear as you did last night, this gentleman, wont stand any such gammon, but will leave you to make your own prayers and die alone. Here, — take some of these quieting-drops ; and then make a clean breast, and tell the gentleman what you want.’

“Stepping back, Tom placed a broken chair for Elliot beside the bed, handed me one, and then took his station by the door.

“Elliot questioned the man a little respecting his past life, and then endeavored to ascertain what was his present state of mind. At first he refused to speak; but upon Elliot’s asking, ‘What can I do for you?’ he almost screamed:

“‘*Do ! do !—why, do everything !* Cure me ; save me from dying ; pray to the Lord for me,—tell him I *must* live ! I’ll promise anything, everything, if he’ll only let me ! I’ll go to church, I’ll pray, I’ll read the Bible, I’ll give up drink, if he’ll make me live. Just tell me that *I’ll live*, and I’ll crawl on my knees to thank you, — I’ll be your servant, your slave ; for I tell you I’m not ready to die, — *I wont die !*’

“ ‘ I cannot deceive you, sir,’ said Elliot, in a firm tone. ‘ Your hours are numbered ; and I pray you use the little time allotted to you in making your peace with God. Seek pardon through Jesus Christ ; for he is ready and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. He will pardon you if you are penitent, and seek in sincerity for forgiveness of your past sins. His blood alone can cleanse you and wipe out all your guilt.’

“ ‘ I can’t pray, sir ; — I can’t ask pardon ! I only want to live, — I don’t care for anything else ! Say something to encourage me.’

“ ‘ Let me repeat a few passages from the Bible as an encouragement

for you to pray,—words of encouragement to the vilest sinner, if he will only give right heed to them,’ said Elliot, repeating many precious promises ; though constantly interrupted by exclamations of impatience and distress from the wretched man, who seemed perfectly dead to every thought and wish but the one desire to live, even though that life might be one of constant suffering.

“After repeating many texts, Elliot asked, ‘ Shall I pray with you ? ’

“ ‘ Yes, you may pray,’ he answered, impatiently ; ‘ but don’t pray for anything else only that the Lord will spare my life. I can’t die ! — I wont die ! ’

“I shuddered at the fierceness with

which he uttered these words, and involuntarily exclaimed, ‘Hush ! sir. Your life is in God’s hands, and you must soon yield it up to him. Do not waste your few precious moments in such vain, rebellious words ; but try to fly to Christ for pardon while there is life and hope.’

“He only glared at me and ground his teeth, and said, ‘Don’t talk to me, — my tongue’s my own. I must live, and I *will* live !’

“Elliot kneeled on the bare floor, and prayed fervently for the wretched, dying man ; beseeching God to have mercy on his soul, and even in the eleventh hour to show his pardoning

mercy in the salvation of that poor, unhappy sinner.

“ I heard low sobs from Tom as he stood near me, with his hat covered over his face, and my tears fell fast as, in heart, I united with Elliot in his supplications.

“ We remained but a short time longer, for we could do him no good. He bade us leave him, saying our presence was only torture to him — that he wished to be alone ; and if he must die, would not have us there to mock him, or rejoice over his agony.

“ Tom went down stairs to the front door with us, shook us each by the hand, thanked us warmly for our kindness, and then returned to

the dying man to watch by him while he lived. It was a fearful scene, auntie ; and I cannot help contrasting it with Bennie's last hours of bodily suffering, but most peaceful death, and our dear Frank's happy and triumphant one."

" I do not wonder at it, Edith. It must be a fearful thing to die and have nought to look back upon but a sinful life unrepented of, — with no Saviour to lean upon, no hope for the future, no light beyond the grave. And how fearful the retribution that often overtakes one, even in this world, for a life of disobedience and sin ! Si Short's cruel treatment of a poor orphan child like Bennie, has no doubt met with

a righteous punishment in his own bodily agonies ; and his violations of the laws of God, in the still greater agonies of his soul in the prospect of death and an eternity beyond."

"And yet, auntie, I cannot help asking myself, 'Who hath made me to differ? Why was not *I* born in poverty, brought up in ignorance, suffered to lead a life of crime and degradation like him? Why have *I* had Christian parents, who early taught me to read and love the Bible, to pray, to seek the Saviour, to prepare for eternity?' Such thoughts make me solemn,—make me feel more earnest to live as I ought. May the scene I have witnessed to-night be a lesson to me to be up and

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doing, to work while the day lasts, and to diligently sow that good seed which shall spring up and bear fruit to life eternal."

With such purposes, and such wishes for a life of piety and usefulness, we will now take our leave of Edith and the rest of our young friends at Cedar Brook. May the same love of doing good, the same simple, unobtrusive piety, that we trust has been shown in the life of Frank and his sisters Annie and Edith, be experienced in the heart and exhibited in the lives of all the young readers of this series. And may the same precious Saviour who was the trust and stay of Bennie and Frank in their last hours, be

also with each one to support and strengthen them in their passage through the darksome valley ; while angels wait around to convey their departing spirits to their heavenly home. Then, in the sweet words of Bonner, may we sing :

“None wanting yonder, —
Bought by the Lamb !
All gathered under
The evergreen palm :
Loud as night's thunder
Ascends the glad psalm.”

The End.











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